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Speech by Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the USSR
and General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee,
at a meeting to mark the 120th anniversary of Lenin's birth
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СЛОВО О ЛЕНИНЕ

Выступление Президента СССР, Генерального секретаря ЦК КПСС на торжественном собрании, посвященном 120-й годовщине со дня рождения В.И. Ленина 20 апреля 1990 года

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Comrades,

The distinguishing feature of any genius is that humanity is constantly in need of him and every era makes us see a new side of him This is how a genius differs from ordinary people

Perestroika is revealing the real Lenin to us It has once again placed his personality and his political and theoretical legacy in the vortex of political and ideological struggle, where the very socialist alternative of perestroika is at stake

Lenin made a unique contribution to the development and practical implementation of the socialist idea—an idea which continues to march on through all the upheavals delusions and tragedies of this century If it was not for Lenin and the October Revolution we would be unable now to give a new treatment to the historic and globally important question of the criteria of progress and of human beings as values unto themselves

The world of Lenin is boundless and covers all spheres of human life and of the human community in all its components and manifestations It involves the situations roles and destinies of all social classes and strata—workers, farmers intellectuals women and young people Nothing is alien to his world from everyday matters to vital political issues from basic morals to law and order in the state, from the principles of political tactics to the philosophical treatment of global processes

Whatever features of this world I choose to highlight in this address, it will be only a partial analysis of a vast subject

Now we see that the tremendous wealth of Lenin's heritage requires comprehensive, not selective studies

The method of his ratiocination his dialectical approach to all issues and the turning points in his historic activity have an eternal purport and are especially important to us today

Lenin remains with us as the greatest thinker of the 20th century who, endowed with vast knowledge of his time, got to grips with the secret workings of social being

Lenin remains with us as an exemplary politician who never used his power in the interests of a particular group let alone to his own selfish ends Whatever turn political and other events took, he never

forgot the interests of the people—the thing that mattered most.

Lenin remains with us as a revolutionary capable of resolute steps in incredibly difficult situations such as when on the threshold of revolution a country is hesitant to cross it, when a mammoth grass-roots force is coming to the surface, and may unleash its creative potential to enrich history or, on the contrary, may act as a destructive element.

The key to Lenin's impact on history lies in his ability to give a precise assessment to its motive forces and to combine in politics the inevitable of the moment with the promising of the future.

His dialectical potential in politics and theory was of special values in transiton periods, when situations were changing rapidly. He recognized all factors, with their mutual contradictions, and discerned the main trend behind them. He foresaw all possible developments and drew up effective policies using them as a basis. This was a great art which we must study and keep on studying.

We are celebrating the 120th anniversary of his birth at a critical stage for perestroika, when change has brought our society to a crucial point in its development.

Perestroika has become our life. It has made us reappraise many things from both our past and our present. We have to look back to the sources of our Great Revolution to realise what kind of society has emerged from it and why we need another revolution of no less importance for our country and the world.

Now it is essential to make these points clear, when perestroika is entering the history of the 20th century as an event to which the standards of major social revolutions need to be applied.

However, as the historical impact and social essence of perestroika are being evaluated, destructive approaches to Lenin have come to the fore. These trends are dangerous because they are simplistic and use the methods of the *Concise History of the Communist Party*, though for the entirely opposite purpose. They are aimed at identifying Lenin with Stalin and paint all Soviet history black to portray the October Revolution and the ensuing events as errors and, even worse, as crimes against the nation and against humanity as a whole.

Such attacks on Lenin are strengthening conservative trends in the Communist Party and society, as the overt and covert enemies of perestroika exploit this opportunity to pose as defenders of Leninism—as they see it.

True, we must reappraise Lenin's theoretical and political legacy, put an end to idolatry and discard misrepresentations. We must draw a dividing line in his legacy between what belongs wholly to the past and what should remain in the intellectual and cultural treasury of our community to encourage its progress.

But disrespect is out of place here. Tendentious and philistine slander of Lenin as a man is immoral, and attempts to cast aspersions on his noble goals and aspirations are absurd.

It is high time we put an end to the absurd idolization of Lenin. Now we know the aim of this too well. But we condemn wholeheartedly the desecration of his memory, whatever form it takes in this

country or abroad.

The sooner we discard simplistic attitudes to Lenin, the better we shall see his grandeur and the extent to which his legacy is topical and essential for us. This is a difficult task, because decades have been spent making an idol out of Lenin — we know for what purpose and ideology. But to give up the true image of Lenin under the pretext of shattering the idol means robbing the hearts and minds of future generations and undermining the very foundations of our state and society.

Defending Lenin does not mean creating a religious cult. As we defend him, we defend our achievements, our quest and our socialist future.

Lenin's era, with its storms, antagonisms, heroism and drama, has receded into the past. It has become our history. Now we must study it, free from lies and myths. It is cultivating knowledge, necessary for shaping the political and ethical culture of our communists, imbuing it with genuine patriotism and internationalism based on education and conviction.

Lenin detested high-flown talk about patriotism. He left us unsurpassed political and moral examples of true patriotism hand in hand with internationalism. He utterly condemned national arrogance and chauvinism. When he felt it was necessary, he wrote his famous article about the national pride of the Great Russians.

An intellectual of noble birth, Lenin was a man of the people. He never saw the working people as clay from which anything could be moulded, nor as objects of philanthropy. Revolution and socialism, the way he saw them, grew due to the creativity of the masses.

This was Lenin's fundamental idea. We see its import with particular clarity today, as we seek to implement it, now that perestroika has aroused the whole of society from its slumber. New social patterns are taking shape, and ever new problems come to the fore. Old patterns can no longer solve them.

Still we hear reproaches: the Party launched perestroika without a detailed long-term plan. Some say that our order of priorities is wrong. Others are nostalgic for the old ways, when new life was squeezed into schemes imposed on the people without considering hard facts.

We had enough of those ways, and we know their consequences only too well. Social reality was squeezed into the procrustean bed of theoretical schemes, and what was too big for them to hold was cut off for being alien and hostile. Our social organism suffocated in its bonds. Ideas and social mentality became deformed.

Having embarked on the course of perestroika, we should remember this lesson very well and not yield to the temptation of locking ourselves in our offices in order to ponder over ways of healing our society. We are much too used to relying on ready-made solutions.

By and large, one can understand people's nostalgia for the times when every step was planned well in advance: after so prolonged a domination by the bureaucratic system of administrative management it is very difficult for us to overcome the ailment of dependence

on directives and the habit of sticking to a certain pattern of thought and acting only on someone's instructions.

Socialism is being created by the masses. Let us think what this famous phrase actually means. The creative efforts of the masses are varied and unpredictable. They cannot be forced in advance into a certain pattern. ". . .The minds of tens of millions of those who are doing things create something infinitely loftier than the greatest genius can foresee," Lenin said.

Perestroika is giving all of us the chance to be ourselves and to take part in creating history. Herein lies its mission of emancipation and a great chance for the entire country to utilize its vast potential at last.

We do need plans and projects. There is no need to prove what immense importance Lenin attached to them. But he considered a plan or project viable and effective only if it was the result of the theoretical comprehension of real processes and the activities of the masses.

Lenin constantly urged the party to measure its intentions and programmes against the expectations and sentiments of the people. Otherwise, any policy, even if it seems to be theoretically correct, can prove inconsistent. He warned that "millions of people will never listen to the advice of parties if that advice does not fall in with their own experience."

That is why Marxism was never a dogma for Lenin. In the very beginning of his career he wrote that the idea was not to "repeat the old conclusions" of the classics "by rote" but to be "able to use the Marxist method of research to analyse the new political situation." This gives us the key to understanding those spectacular changes of direction which Lenin made at crucial points of historical development.

Each of these changes was very difficult to make. Lenin had not only to struggle with himself and his political opponents but also to withstand strong pressure from his comrades in the party who reproached him for "giving up the principles" of Marxism and even "deviating" from it. Responding to such accusations, Lenin wrote: if things have worked out differently, if they are more original, more unusual, more varied than anyone could have expected, we should not "take after those 'old Bolsheviks' who more than once played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulae senselessly learned by rote instead of studying the specific features of the new and living reality." Such people, he went on to say, "should be consigned to the archive of 'Bolshevik' pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of 'old Bolsheviks')."

Sarcastically destroying the Narcissus-like revolutionaries who pined away for love of themselves, Lenin warned that a revolution "that took these people seriously would perish irrevocably (and deservedly)."

I am deliberately quoting Lenin frequently in this part of my speech in order for us to see the character of his statements on an issue of such topical importance to us today.

At these sudden changes of direction, Lenin sometimes had to enter into conflict with his colleagues and bluntly go against the majority. This is vividly borne out by the story of the Brest Peace Treaty and the most acute problems created by the transition to NEP (New Economic Policy). This is how one of the participants in those events described what happened: Probably only Krasin and Lyubimov agreed with Lenin right from the very beginning, while all the others either kept quiet or objected. This is how Lenin reacted (I quote): "When I look straight into your eyes, you seem to agree with me and say yes. But as soon as I turn away, you say no. You are playing hide-and-seek with me. Then allow me to play an ordinary parliamentary game with you. When Parliament gives a no-confidence vote to the head of government, he resigns. You expressed no confidence in me during the conclusion of the Brest peace, although even fools understand now that my policy was correct. Now once again you have no confidence in me concerning the New Economic Policy. I thereby draw the conclusion common in parliamentary practice and hand in my resignation to the two highest bodies—the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Plenum."

Lenin's arguments and logic eventually prevailed: the Party accepted NEP.

For all his love for theory Lenin changed his mind when life demanded it, disregarded any postulates or dogmas which had seemed sacred, and relied on a specific analysis of a concrete situation, which he considered to be "the living soul" of Marxism.

Thinking over the lessons given by Lenin, we should bear in mind that he was living at a tough time, when there was widespread violence and when revolutionaries, including the greatest humanists, had to "hold their hearts by the wings", as one Bolshevik worker described it.

From time to time nowadays, we are asked whether the October Revolution was necessary at all and whether it wouldn't have been better for Russia to stop after the February Revolution. In the political battle of ideas, such deliberations, which are absurd with respect to the past, as a rule, have a demagogic purpose. There is only one remedy for them—stark facts.

It goes without saying that the February Revolution was an outstanding event in Russian history. It is a fact, however, that the bourgeois Menshevik government failed to resolve the main issues of the Russian revolution—peace, bread and land. The country was heading for a national catastrophe. Later, rejecting the accusation that the Bolsheviks had deliberately "drowned the country in blood", Lenin said: "Is there a fool in the world who would have resorted to revolution if you (i.e. the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries) had really begun social reform? Why did you not do so?"

Lenin resorted to every trick in the book to avoid civil war. The Bolsheviks, soon after the Kornilov rebellion, proposed a compromise with the other socialist parties: "without any claim to participate in the government", they "would refrain from demanding the immediate transfer of power to the proletariat and the poor peasants

and from employing revolutionary methods of fighting for this demand." The Mensheviks and the S.R.s,. . . would then agree. . . to form a government without the bourgeois parties which could be wholly and exclusively responsible to the Soviets. . . This would ensure that "the revolution would proceed peacefully and party strife in the Soviets **would be peacefully overcome. . .** "

It is worth remembering all this now, because many people today—some out of ignorance, others deliberately—select episodes, facts and documents from the chain of events to prove Lenin's alleged inclination for violence. But Lenin always sought political solutions as long as they were possible. Some even said he had devised a whole "theory of compromises". ". . .Violence is, of course, alien to our ideals," he wrote. These are the words that need to be comprehended by anyone who wants to understand Lenin.

The above example is not merely a reference to true historical facts and a means of discovering the real Lenin. It is also crucial to us in another important respect.

In the revolutionary turmoil in which it finds itself, this country is again attempting a historic breakthrough in search of justice and prosperity. Launched by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and inspiring most of the people, the policy of perestroika is measuring up to the revolutionary tasks which are facing society. The methods of conducting this policy are designed to keep the formidable drive towards profound transformations safely within the democratic framework based on national concord and unity, and to prevent the country from heading into the chaos of civil and ethnic conflict fraught with violence, death and bloodshed. True, in some parts of the country, events have proved too volatile to be restricted to the above framework. Regrettably, we know what it means to have to cope with the grave consequences of this.

And in such circumstances, I ask those who keep talking about the phantom of civil war and making people used to thinking about it, those who are stirring up confrontation in society and between ethnic groups, those who are sowing the seeds of intolerance and hatred and who have turned the "enemy image" into a commodity to be constantly traded whether or not they realise where all this is leading them. Or is theirs a deliberate attempt to cause chaos and disintegration?

It is necessary to act in keeping with common sense: power must advance reform in all walks of life, paving the way for society's cohesion and acting firmly to uphold the law. Deliberations appealing to populist sentiment and the abuse of democracy and glasnost can only stir up trouble and incite activity of a destructive nature.

So where will this take us? We ought to know our history well if we are going to involve ourselves in politics in such a country as ours.

Comrades, when we argue about socialism and search for its new image, we can understand many things better if we perceive the evolution of Lenin's view of socialism.

What Lenin inherited from Marx was caution and responsibility regarding all sorts of fantasies about the future and attempts to

present it in some rigidly-defined shapes, despite strong pressure from the workers' movement demanding to be given a specific ideal, a sketch of society it was to be encouraged to fight for. It was no more than a tribute to the largely abstract, theoretical and popularly expected vision of socialism—there is no way of denying that this is what it was—that Lenin made in his brilliant work *The State and the Revolution* which he wrote on the eve of the October Revolution. But in *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Power* written in the spring of 1918, by which time he had gained a good deal of practical experience and was in a position to learn the lessons of the revolution, Lenin's vision of socialism began to change.

Small wonder, during the transition to the New Economic Policy (NEP), Lenin repeatedly recalled and referred to that particular work as well as to his articles written in March-May 1918. He emphasized that even then, in his argument with the left-wing Communists, he persistently called for "reformist" and "gradualist" means of economic development and methods of transition to socialism. This is another corroboration of the fact that realism was a basic feature of Lenin's politics and philosophy. What he thought about was not the "introduction of socialism" through enforced "doctrine", but how to make people's lives better, how to govern the country in the entirely new situation created by the revolution, and how to meet the people's vital needs.

The civil war interfered ruthlessly with his quest for the most feasible path towards socialism, and the course of events frustrated his hopes of achieving communism in a daredevil thrust.

The main treasury of Lenin's idea of socialism and his main contribution to the development of the socialist philosophy can be found in his works and policies connected with NEP and, of course, in his "testament". These mark the beginning of a new stage in Lenin's work on the theory of socialism.

It will, admittedly, still take a great deal of intellectual effort to find out what his ultimate goal actually was as he pondered over hitherto accumulated experience, the real state of society and the popular mood. We have yet to reconstruct with the utmost historical precision the logic of Lenin's train of thought and his conclusions.

Subsequently, Lenin, as we all know, admitted "the mistake of deciding to go over directly to communist production and distribution." But the question is whether he referred only to the policy carried out in 1918-1920. This policy, as Lenin himself repeatedly declared, was a forced measure prompted by the brutal civil war and foreign intervention, economic dislocation, famine and the threat of the complete disintegration of the social framework. Or was it more than that? Everything points to the fact that he was contemplating the entire concept of transition from capitalism to socialism, as it developed after Marx.

Although Lenin had done a great deal of work in this area, he did not have enough time to develop a coherent concept of Russia's transition to a new system. But it's high time we finally tried to find out—in the context of the political struggle that engulfed the party

and society at the time—whether Lenin regarded NEP merely as a tactical respite or as an attempt to review the role of the October Revolution and Russia in the fate of world civilisation and to give the socialist idea a whole new meaning when he realised that hopes for the victory of the "world revolution" had been frustrated.

If we take a new look at everything Lenin did in his last years, everything he wrote, everything he criticised and everything he advocated, if we try to discover the essence of his work, we shall see that it was a search for a new concept of socialism and a means of unifying people divided by cruelty and hatred and of rallying them round a constructive cause or, as we now say, pooling the efforts of all those who are willing to participate in or at least assist the civilised development of Russia in her desire for social justice and the well-being of the working people.

Hence the idea of forging an alliance and establishing "proper relations" with all peasants. Hence the striving to win over to the side of the new regime intellectuals and specialists and all who were prepared to accept the people's choice. Hence the idea whereby it was essential that the achievements of world civilisation be adopted. Hence the shift of emphasis from political struggle to systematic cultural work in its widest sense embracing relations between classes, economics and culture itself. Hence the persistent demand to use such economic development levers as the market, trade, finances and capital, including private capital in the form of concessions. Hence the attempts to reach an agreement with those in the international working class movement who did not accept the October Revolution. Hence orientation to co-existence with the "peace party" in the bourgeois West.

The question was, in effect, of a revolution within a revolution, perhaps as profound as the October Revolution, and what is particularly important of a peaceful revolution that opened up prospects for the gradual self-reformation of society on the basis of socialist principles.

It is precisely in this way one may interpret the concept of "civil peace" which Lenin put forward in 1921 and which he wanted not only for the country's future development but also for world politics as a whole.

Unfortunately, Lenin was given too little time for building a new society in peaceful conditions. The radical change in his concept of socialism was not properly understood and supported by his followers. Moreover, some of his last recommendations, which could have influenced the subsequent development of the country and the future of socialism in a dramatic way, were simply ignored. This led to distortions and many tragedies.

Of course, no one is going to apply to our time and to perestroika the tasks Lenin sensed and saw towards the end of his life or consider his ideas as direct instructions for us. Yet, in their scope, nature and way of thinking, these are similar tasks.

The most general and important thing that makes this comparison legitimate is that now as before we have (here I repeat myself again)

a revolution within a revolution, a realistic programme for building a new society and the most effective methods of implementing the socialist choice

That is why when we conceived and began perestroika we undertook to study above all, Lenin's last works and we derived from them the conviction that we had embarked upon the right, albeit difficult, path. As for the practical policy of perestroika, this was most certainly determined by our specific conditions. Yet, a similarity exists to Lenin's time not only in principle—in both cases it was a transitional period and the building of a new society—but also in the main directions of reforms. As was the case then, the question was point-blank: we need a new economy, the reorganisation of the political system and the building of a truly federative state.

Our entire Party is now busy tackling these problems. The Supreme Soviet, the President and the Government are all dealing with them. The elaboration of an effective economic policy and the creation of a full-blown market are our priorities, as is land reform based on the Land Law and making the peasants the true masters of their land. The success of our efforts to ensure a change in meeting people's requirements and to improve people's living standards depends on how firm and consistent we are in carrying out these reforms. This is why the President has now knuckled down to the job of taking drastic measures to speed up economic reform. This task is crucial for our entire development. The idea is to make fundamental changes in the basis and, consequently, in the superstructure, that is to say in all social institutions.

What are the aims of the proposed changes? Do they accord with the choice we have made, the strategic goals of perestroika and our movement towards humane and democratic socialism?

My answer is yes, they do. Socialism does not rule out the market or new forms of management based on restructured property relations, because socialism is freedom. It is a system created by the people themselves. It is social justice and security. It is the well-being of the people. Thus, we radically change our concept of socialist society and progress in our understanding of the essence of socialism. This, in turn, facilitates the attainment of our practical objectives.

We are making the right choice. Such is the radical change in our views that we have made in the process of perestroika. It is not an act of despair but a well thought out programme of consistent moves towards a new socialist economy.

The political reform, as you all must have realised, also implies many new developments. The first elections in the republican and local Soviets since the beginning of perestroika have been held. They have brought political reforms to all regions of the Soviet Union. New people have appeared in the Soviet bodies of power and a new body of parliamentary deputies is being formed. They are to tackle the tasks of perestroika in a way where they are in direct contact with their constituents.

We are on the right path here too. Nevertheless, one should not take a simplistic view of the situation. In many Soviets the leadership

has been taken over by people who have little experience in tackling political and economic problems and do not quite realise what it means to bear the responsibility for everything that happens on their territory Especially since not everyone in the newly-elected Soviets seems to realise that the elections and election rallies are over People are waiting for decisions and practical actions. Hard work lies ahead As Lenin said, "we must learn to combine the 'public meeting democracy of the working people—turbulent surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with iron discipline while at work "

The law on local self-government gives the Soviets a material basis for independent work and genuine responsibility for running the affairs of the state. The Soviets should become a truly authoritative and efficient force which people could believe in and which people could rely on for defending their interests and rights and solving the problems that have accumulated

It is important that while assuring their independence they realise they are part of a single system that rises up to the supreme authority in the country, and can count on prompt assistance and attention

In short, in the new situation we must recreate the truly Leninist spirit of Soviet power as the most democratic and effective mechanism for safeguarding people s interests.

The third decisive element of the new society in our country is the federative structure of our multinational state There are many instructive aspects in Lenin s experience here too, including the evolution of his views on this question which is of the utmost importance for the Russian Revolution

Before the World War seeing the unifying trend created by capitalism as economically progressive, Lenin just like many other Marxists, treated the idea of a federation and decentralization negatively Moreover he always resolutely defended the right to secession for any who did not wish to remain within a centralized state

However in connection with the national movements which flared up during the war and especially in connection with the revolution in Russia, Lenin sharply changed his views

I think that this change of opinion regarding national development should likewise be classed among Lenin's great divinations alongside the Brest Peace Treaty and NEP It is common knowledge that on this issue he had to wage a long struggle to the end of his days not only with opponents but also with his fellow Party members

The victory of the October Revolution put the question of self-determination into a practical context The construction of a new society in Russia was unthinkable without the normal coexistence of the numerous nations and nationalities inhabiting it However the great liberating revolution, aimed also against the tsarist great-power policy, was also naturally accompanied by a strong centrifugal trend On the ruins of the empire, the drive for self-determination gave birth to most different forms based on what was purely the national principle This resulted in the emergence of regional territorial autonomies with specific ethnic features In the Russian and Ukrain-

ian gubernias (regions—*ed.*), large autonomies were formed on the basis of purely economic interests. Many of those new formations proved short-lived, but the very diversity of forms was typical of a truly popular revolution.

It was clear for Lenin that the country's unity, to which he always gave his support, could only be preserved through an exclusively voluntary federation with the unquestionable recognition of the right to self-determination up to the point of secession.

Lenin had to wage a real battle against Stalin and his supporters who did not see any difference between the Russian Federation and the Union federation and generally believed that any talk about sovereignty and national statehood was a tactical move or, to quote Stalin, a political "game" which "some people have started taking at face value".

Lenin admitted the possibility of federations of different types, with different levels of relations between the national entities prepared to form a union. Such a union of nations, he wrote, would not detract from anyone's independence but would only create "another new storey, a federation of equal republics". He even insisted on that a "detailed code" should be worked out which would lay a foundation for a new culture in interethnic relations. In his opinion, such a code had to be worked out not by bureaucrats from the central government machinery, whom Lenin strongly suspected of great power ambitions, but by the "nationals" themselves.

These ideas remained largely unfulfilled or gained only formal recognition. The multinational state was forced into the straight jacket of being a centralized state.

Of course, even given these circumstances, the country attained spectacular results, including in the ethnic life of many peoples. We can rely on these results when making our plans for today. But because of the disregard of the laws towards ethnic development, problems have been gradually accumulated to come to a head at the new, sharp turn of history.

Today, the country's search for ways out is a painful one. Many things have been carefully considered lately. The Party has proposed a programme of nationalities policy for today's conditions. The Congress of People's Deputies and the USSR Supreme Soviet have adopted major decisions, such as the laws on languages and economic independence. They have adopted the Law on the Order of Seceding from the USSR. Efforts are under way to renew the Treaty of the Union. Today, maybe, is the most responsible stage in law making, tied up as it is to the fate of the Soviet federation.

Lenin's idea of the federation, its types and the level of interdependence provides the key to today's searching. We are confident that in the long run we will be able to harmonize interethnic relations. The quiet, sober minded work within the format of the law alone, rather than the separatist extremist moves we have seen in the Baltic republics, in the Caucasus and some other regions of the country, will lead us to the goal which will meet the basic interests of all nationalities and give second wind to our great multiethnic community.

Comrades, one feature of society which we are striving for along the road of perestroika is a renovated, **reformed Communist Party.**

We are on the eve of the 28th Congress of the CPSU. Where the Party is concerned history itself necessitates a turn comparable in meaning with the formation of the "party of a new type" effected under Lenin's guidance. The platform of the CPSU Central Committee and the draft Rules, which are actively and critically being considered by the Communists and society as a whole, have laid the cornerstone for a principally new stage in the development of the Communist Party.

What is the connection between the situation today and the Leninist Party tradition? It is, primarily, the dependence of the Party's development processes on the objectively changed situation in the country and the world. The 10th Congress of the RCP(B), which we usually remember only in connection with the resolution on the Party's unity, also adopted the resolution on the Party building. The resolution refuted the existence of any "absolutely correct form of Party organisation, applicable to all stages of the revolutionary process, as well as methods of its work. On the contrary, the form of organisation and methods of work are fully dependent on the peculiarities of the specific historical situation and the tasks which directly arise from the situation."

With the commencement of the peaceful period that followed the conclusion of the Civil War, the evolution of the Party into a new state was especially painful. This was only natural, as the Party had been integrated in the system of state power, based as it was on the dictatorship of the proletariat. The time was fraught with danger when, to quote the resolution, the "centralisation (in the Party) has given rise to the trend of its becoming a bureaucracy divorced from the masses"; when the Party during the Civil War had the monopoly on power and got the knack of commanding everything and anything commissar-style; when the "necessary privileges were becoming the basis for the misuse of office of all kinds"; and when the "Party's spiritual life" was waning. There were symptoms of moral degeneration. Together, these phenomena resulted in an "internal Party crisis". These are all words from the resolution.

The Congress saw a way out as lying in the enhancement of Party democracy. We know from Lenin's last works of his intense quest for ways to stop the negative trends and impart to the Party a new image in line with the new situation in the country by way of the broad involvement of the mass of Communists, of the Party grass roots.

Regrettably, he was not around to take part in implementing his ideas. The changes in the Party, long overripe at the turn of the 1920s, were taken up by Stalin, which spelled disaster for the Party, society and socialism. Over a short period of time, the Party was actually made a component part and a tool of the administration-and-command system, with all the far-reaching consequences that can still be felt to this day.

The conclusion is: today restoring the Leninist norms of Party life proper is not enough. The drive for the reconstruction of the whole

country has set a far more formidable task

Our society needs a vanguard party of the socialist choice acting by exclusively democratic methods under conditions where there is glasnost, a law-governed state, and political pluralism Once having got the ability to work in these new conditions, the Party will be able to lead the majority of the people, rallying all social strata and different nationalities in the drive towards a humane, democratic socialism

The CPSU has great traditions of being able to persuade the masses that it is right In 1917, it took it only several months to win the sympathy and support of the broad masses The people followed the Bolsheviks, said Lenin not because "their propaganda was more skilful No, the point is that their propaganda was more truthful" The wave of the February Revolution brought to the surface of political life many politicians and demagogues, for whom personal ambition and striving to make a career in politics were paramount to the country s plight Millions of high-flown words hailing "His Excellence the People" and "The Liberator People" were heaped on the workers peasants and soldiers causing quite a few heads to spin

Lenin rejected any abuse of the masses political backwardness or their use for selfish purposes through deception, flattery, promises by the million and petty offerings "We are not charlatans ," he said "Talk, flattery of the revolutionary people is the one thing that has ruined all revolutions The whole of Marxism teaches us not to succumb to revolutionary phrases, particularly at a time when they have the greatest currency "

And so? From February to October given absolute freedom of choice and in the midst of intense inter-party rivalry, the Bolsheviks grew from a Party of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, leading tens of millions along

From the point of view of ability to campaign for the support of the masses, the current turning point in the life of our country demands no less political activity from the Party We must revive the Bolshevik art of conviction in competition with any rival, and no one should complain of "having remained without support", or "having been left to the mercy of the crowd, unprotected from informal movements" etc Concurrently, we must be ready to form political coalitions, to make compromises and to work together with various public movements

Giving up its managerial functions, the CPSU does not relieve itself of the responsibility for the situation in the country The people will judge the Party not only by its slogans, platforms, resolutions and calls, but first and foremost by the results and quality of Communists activity in their work places and in society s political, cultural, administrative and economic spheres

Comrades, the current discussion has embraced the theoretical and ideological foundations of the Party, naturally including the question of **Leninism** Moreover, some are advancing their arguments from nihilistic and, I would even say aggressive positions

The inadmissibility of the dogmatic utilization of this concept in

the form inherited from Stalin is obvious, for it has engendered a speculative and sometimes cynical attitude to Leninism. And most people, poorly versed in theory, perceive it as a kind of religion which they have not taken pains to understand.

"Leninism" as a term emerged in the Menshevik milieu long before 1917, as a way of juxtaposing the ideas of Lenin's to those of Marx. In the early 1920s, this concept was borrowed by Lenin's supporters to define a new stage in the development of Marxism. Lenin protested against this not only out of modesty, but rather because he had never claimed to be the founder of a special integral theoretical and philosophical system. He sincerely considered himself to be Marx's follower and viewed his contribution to theory as part of Marxist teaching.

One should be extremely cautious when discussing such a theoretical and political category as Leninism, without which a correct understanding of progress in the 20th century is just unthinkable. And one should not yield to pressure from nihilists and those who are ignorant of history and theory.

For us Leninism remains a live and active theoretical, ideological and moral force. Today we are restoring the genuine meaning of Lenin's heritage and we are trying to do this job in all earnest. It is not going to be easy. As perestroika continues and as we tackle emergencies we are actively involving ourselves in this work. We have done a great deal, but we are to do still more during the preparations for the 28th Congress of the CPSU, at the Congress itself and during the drafting of a new Party Programme.

Guided by the immortal ideas of Lenin's heritage and by modern knowledge, and mastering the latest achievements in the science of man and society, we shall be seeking our own ways of dealing with the problems and challenges of our time.

Comrades, our society has no reasonable alternative to socialist restructuring, for it is a complicated, but inevitable way of tackling difficulties which will lead us to real progress. Advancing along this path, we cannot do without Lenin's heritage, enriched with the experience and lessons of our own and world history.

The success of perestroika will mark an unprecedented stage in the development of civilization. Perestroika may become the beginning of an epoch of such grandiose transformations, virtually revolutions, whose nonviolent and democratic methods and results may bring the world, as Lenin dreamed, to the very essence of man's existence on Earth.